

## Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8372

C O N F I D E N T I A L LIBREVILLE 1957

E.O. 11652: GUDS

TAGS: PFOR, GB, US

SUBJECT: MEETING WITH PRESIDENT BONGO-- ECONOMIC COUNSELOR

REF: STATE 233044

SUMMARY: PRESIDENT BONGO REITERATED REQUEST FOR ASSISTANCE IN FINDING AMERICAN TO SERVE AS ECONOMIC COUNSELOR IN PRESIDENCY, AND SUGGESTED DEPARTMENT CONSULT WITH SUCH PRIVATE SECTOR SOURCES OF TALENT AS TEMPLESMAN AND CITIBANK. END SUMMARY.

1. IN COURSE MEETING WITH PRESIDENT BONGO SEPTEMBER 29, HE AGAIN MENTIONED HIS INTEEST IN HAVING ECONIMC COUNSELORS IN PRESIDENCY REPRESENTING MAJOR TRADINGPARTNERS OTHER THAN FRANCE, AND SPECIFIED US, GERMANY AND ITALY IN THIS REGARD. HE REITERATED HIS REQUEST THAT USG HELP HIM FIND APPROPRIATE INDIVICUAL TO FILL THIS POSITION.

2. IN RESPONSE TO MY QUESTION,PRESIDENT SAID HE HAD ALSO DISCUSSED THIS MATTER WITH MAURICE TEMPLESMAN DURING HIS NEW YORK VISIT AND HAD ASKED LATTER TO HELP AS WELL WITH TALENT SEARCH. HE THOUGHT DEPARTMENT MIGHT USEFULLY CONSULT FURTHER WITH TEMPLEMAN ON QUESTION, AND AGREED THAT TEMPLESMAN MIGHT BE ABLE TO COME UP WITH QUALIFIED INDIVIDUAL FROM HIS OWN STAFF. PRESIDENT SAID HE HOPED TO FIND BILINGUAL AMERICAN WITH EXTNESIVE KNOWLEDGE OF US COPRORATE SCENE WHO COULD HANDLE ALL NEGOTIATIONS, ORAL  
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AND WRITTEN, WITH AMERICAN FIRMS INTERESTED IN GABON. IDEAL

CANDIDATE WOULD HAVE SOLID BACKGROUND IN PRIVATE BUSINESS, PERHAPS BANKING FIELD, WHICH LED HIM TO FURTHER SUGGESTION THAT CITIBANK MIGHT ALSO BE SOURCE FOR SUCH ADVISER.

3. IN SEPARATE DISCUSSION, CABINET DIRECTOR MAYILA SAID CONTRACT WITH APPROPRIATE INDIVIDUAL WOULD BE INDIVIDUALLY NEGOTIATED AND WOULD NORMALLY INCLUDE HOUSING, CAR AND VACATION EVERY TWO YEARS. HE DECLINED SPECIFY SALARY LEVEL, SAYING THIS WOULD HAVE TO DEPEND ON INDIVIDUAL QUALIFICATIONS AND RESULT OF NEGOTIATIONS.

4. COMMENT: BELIEVE IT WOULD BE IN OUR BEST INTEREST TO LEAVE SEARCH FOR COUNSELOR IN PRIVATE HANDS TO MAXIMUM EXTENT POSSIBLE, WITH TEMPLESMAN BY FAR BEST PLACED TO MAKE FINAL RECOMMENDATION TO BONGO. GIVEN CLOSE PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TEMPLESMAN AND BONGO, INDIVIDUAL SELECTED BY FORMER WOULD BE ASSURED OF SUBSTANTIAL PRESIDENTIAL CONFIDENCE FROM OUTSET, AND UNLIKE USG SELECTION WOULD NOT HAVE TO PROVE CONSTANTLY THAT HIS PRIMARY LOYALTY IS TO BONGO RATHER THAN TO HIS HOME GOVERNMENT. TEMPLESMAN AND HIS LOCAL REPRESENTATIVES HAVE ALWAYS BEEN COMPLETELY OPEN WITH EMBASSY, AND WE WOULD HOPE SIMILAR RELATIONSHIP OF MUTUAL SUPPORT WOULD BE ESTABLISHED WITH ANYONE HE RECOMMENDED FOR POSITION IN PRESIDENCY. SAME IS ALSO TRUE OF CITIBANK, WHICH PRESIDENT NOTE AS POSSIBLE SOURCE OF SUITABLE CANDIDATE, THOUGH BANK DESIGNEE WOULD LACK SPECIAL CACHET DERIVED FROM TEMPLESMAN-BONGO TIE.

5. IN ANY EVENT, AMERICAN COUNSELOR IN PRESIDENCY WOULD REQUIRE EXCEPTIONAL DEGREE OF SELF RELIANCE AND ADAPTABILITY. CANDIDATES SHOULD BE UNDER NO ILLUSIONS ABOUT DIFFICULTIES THEY WOULD FACE IN ESTABLISHING THEMSELVES VIS A VIS ENTRENCHED FRENCH INFLUENCES AND IN MAINTAINING DIRECT ACCESS TO PRESIDENT ON WHICH THEIR SUCCESS WOULD DEPEND. DESPITE THESE DIFFICULTIES, HOWEVER, WE AGREE THAT BONGO'S INTEREST IN AMERICAN COUNSELOR OFFERS OPPORTUNITY WELL WORTH PURSUING, AND WE HOPE THAT SUITABLE INDIVIDUAL CAN BE FOUND THROUGH APPROPRIATE CONSULTATION WITH SUCH PRIVATE SECTOR SOURCES AS TEMPLESMAN AND CITIBANK. STEIGMAN  
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